

**Testimony of David Amsden
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Before the US House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
Committee on Veterans Affairs
November 6, 2013
Waco, Texas**

On behalf of Cognizant Technology Solutions, I want to thank Subcommittee Chairman Bill Flores and Ranking Member Mark Takano for holding this field hearing on Veterans Hiring, a topic that I hold very close to my heart, and in which the company I represent here has made great strides.

On a personal note, I am a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute and come from a long line of family members that served in the United States military. I was honored to be an Army officer and follow in the footsteps of both my father and grandfather, each of whom also wore the uniform of our country.

For those who may not have heard of Cognizant, we are well known to many of the businesses in your state. We provide information technology, consulting, and business process services to hundreds of companies in the U.S.

Our 27,000 employees in the U.S. tend to work for energy companies and at pharmaceutical companies, banking institutions, healthcare payers and providers, manufacturers, retailers, and colleges and universities in the 49 states where we have employees.

Texas is and has been a very important state to the company; it is our 3rd largest presence in the U.S. with over 2,000 employees to date. Our Texas clients include energy, healthcare and financial services companies, in addition to universities. We work and live locally, pay taxes and patronize local businesses throughout the state. We appreciate the business-friendly environment that the state offers to innovative companies such as ours.

The overall goal of our company is to help our customers build stronger businesses, by both running better, or driving performance efficiencies and effectiveness, and running different, or driving growth through innovation and business transformation. But we have an additional goal: to give back to the communities in which we live and work. I acknowledge to some that those words may just seem like a sound bite, but I can assure you, this is a creed that is ingrained in us and makes our business better in every way.

In 2008, our company's leadership saw that soldiers arriving back from Iraq and Afghanistan needed support to find employment. This was underscored by a growing number of unemployed veterans.

In response, Cognizant launched a multi-tiered program aimed at helping those veterans get the training and help they needed to secure job interviews and stable employment situations.

The goals of our Veterans in Technology (VIT) program are twofold: First, to design and implement initiatives that not just create a military-friendly work environment, but also allow the veterans and their families to assimilate into the private sector. And second, to maintain a disability program that is ADAAA compliant for all disabled employees.

We are currently involved in several different initiatives focused on addressing the issue of veteran unemployment in this country.

Cognizant is working with Virginia Military Institute to become a member of the Military outplacement program and will be connecting with other Military academies such as West Point, Air Force Academy and Coast Guard.

We entered into a Partnership with SAP – another technology company – to hire recently separated veterans as part of a pilot program. SAP's Veterans-to-Work Program provides certification in areas that include HANA, ASE, Business Intelligence, Web intelligence, and the Sybase Unwired Program.

Cognizant is developing a job transition program called "Public to Private," which will help veterans with basic job search skills such as resume writing, interviewing skills, job search via internet, networking and using alumni programs. Several of these programs have already taken place across the country this past year and we have several more scheduled in the coming months.

Cognizant has also partnered with Monster and will be taking part in the "100,000 jobs" mission established by JP Morgan Chase.

We have briefed the White House on these initiatives and they are supportive of our veteran recruitment programs. We will continue to update them as we progress and grow these efforts.

Although we are pleased with our successes so far, it would be pertinent to highlight a few challenges – both from our perspective and from that of the veterans.

From the company's perspective, the challenges have included: *finding* the veterans with the right skills or those that have interest in training for the skills; and translating veteran resumes into specific job requirements.

From the veterans' perspective, the one key challenge is that they are not sure how their interests, skills and experience translate into civilian jobs; frequently they do not have experience marketing themselves with resumes and interviewing. The veteran/military community is relatively less familiar with the Cognizant brand. So veterans do not approach Cognizant on their own. And there is a lack of formalized training programs to build and augment the technical skillsets of veteran hires.

We know that we can overcome these challenges, particularly because there is a natural compatibility between Cognizant and the veteran workforce. Those that served in our armed forces now form a workforce that comes with certain key qualities such as leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, problem solving and the ability to work under pressure; qualities that both Cognizant and the companies we work with value tremendously.

This past year, in 2013, Cognizant added over 100 veterans, and, as a company, we currently employ over 200 veterans and growing. The number of veterans hired thus far has been higher than what we originally projected because those hires have proven to be such exceptional employees.

The company is very proud of these accomplishments but knows that there is more to be done.

Cognizant's Veterans in Technology program aims to increase Veteran hiring in 2013 and 2014 through continued programming and an increase in partnerships. Discussions are already underway with Texas A&M and other colleges and universities that would significantly expand our Veterans in Training program, particularly on the west coast.

Our recruiting mission includes building and maintaining a community of employees who have served in the US military and providing opportunities for veterans and their families. We want to help make it possible for them to lead productive, satisfying, prosperous lives, contributing in the private sector after completion of their military service.

I am extremely proud of the work we have been doing with the veteran community. We have created a strong foundation that we can expand upon for years to come.

Again, I am grateful for the opportunity to testify today to share some of what Cognizant has been doing to recruit and help our nation's veterans enter the private workforce. We are grateful to you, Mr. Chairman, and to all of the members of this committee for your attention to the needs of our nation's veterans.